Disturbed by Warren's Early Actions

Ford Went to FBI Aide About JFK Probe

By Jeremiah O'Leary
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Former President Gerald R. Ford acknowledged today that he went to an FBI official shortly after the assassination of John F. Kennedy because he was disturbed at the way the investigation was being organized by Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Ford, who was to serve as a member of the Warren Commission, said he met twice in December 1963 with Cartha D. DeLoach, who was assistant director of the FBI at the time.

Testifying before the House Assassinations Committee today, Ford said he contacted DeLoach because he feared Warren was, through the appointment of a general counsel, in the process of "creating a one-man commission."

"Others on the commision felt the same way," Ford said. "Justice Warren originally intended to name Warren Olney as chief counsel of the commission, but that was changed to give the post to the chief counsel who conducted the commission's work, J. Lee Rankin.

"I told DeLoach of the conflict within the Warren Commission," Ford Said. "At the same time we discussed possible decisions of the commission. I did tell him of a visit I had with then-CIA Director John McCone."

But Ford said the only contacts with DeLoach were made in the organizational phase of the commission and before hearings were held. He added that he did not have any contact after Dec. 17.

THERE HAVE BEEN questions as to whether Ford was used by the FBI to report on what was going on during the commission's hearings, but the former president insisted that his meetings with DeLoach were not continued.

—Washington Star Photographer Paul A. Schmick

Former President Gerald Ford testifies before the House Assassinations Committee today.

He added that the FBI had its own liaison officer present at all of the hearings of the Warren Commission, which were held in executive session.

Ford said he went to DeLoach instead of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover because as a member of the House of Representatives he had been accustomed to dealing with DeLoach on FBI matters.

FORD categorically denied today that the Warren Commission's investigation was deficient.

But he said that if the commission had known about CIA plots against the life of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro it might have changed the extent of the inquiry.

"The conclusions reached by the Warren Commission were correct," the former president testified, "and to this date I have seen nothing to change my opinion. The Warren Commission did use the intelligence agencies of the federal government for its initial information, but we never accepted it at face value. There was always an independent follow-up and cross-checking by our own staff. Our conclusions were based on our own investigations and this process."

Ford said it was decided at the outset that it would be inadvisable for the commission to create a totally new investigative staff.

"We decided it was far better to employ the group of 14 prestigous lawyers for our staff and that this staff would work with various agencies such as the FBI, the CIA the Secret Service and others," he said.

"Our staff and the commission used the personnel of the federal establishment, but we were never satisfied with the information we got," Ford said. "What we did was use them as a base and the Warren Commission took off from there."

Ford said the commission would have had to extend its inquiry if it had known that the CIA was plotting to kill Castro but that he did not think it would have changed the conclusion of the commission that Oswald acted alone as the single assassin.

YESTERDAY, a former high-ranking FBI official told the committee that Lee Harvey Oswald should have been on the FBI's security index, a list of persons deemed potentially dangerous and requiring close watching, during the days preceding the assassination of Kennedy.

Under questioning by Chairman Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, however, the ex-official said it wouldn't have prevented the Dallas assassination if Oswald had been on the list.

James H. Gale, who was assistant director of the bureau's inspection division at the time, said the bureau committed internal errors in han-

dling evidence along with investigative and reporting delinquencies regarding Oswald, Kennedy's accused assassin.

Gale said Edgar Hoover assigned him to investigate the bureau's pre-assassination handling of the Oswald case the day after the president was killed.

He said he found enough errors and discrepancies for his conclusion that administrative action should be taken against the responsible personnel and disciplinary action was recommended against 17 agents and supervisors. The administrative action was carried out, even though some agents on the Oswald case feared word of it might get out and embarrass the commission.

"Oswald should have been on the Security Index; his wife, Marina, should have been interviewed and the case should have been expedited after Oswald visited the Soviet Embassy in Mexico," Gale testified.

Gale said one of the excuses from Special Agent James P. Hosty in Dallas for not pressing ahead with the case was that Oswald had just beaten his wife and that a 60-day cooling off period should take place before calling on the Oswalds again. That was 10 days before the assassination.

"THE AGENT FELT Marina Oswald should not feel that she was being harassed," according to Gale. "Mr. Hoover said that was an asinine excuse. I thought she should have been interviewed right after her husband beat her because she would be more likely to tell us about him under those circumstances.' Mr. Hoover said he did not understand such solicitude."

The Hosty visit to Marina in search of Lee led her to write down the agent's name, phone number and auto license number. Oswald was angered by the visit and dispatched a note to the Dallas FBI field office threatening to blow up the police station if his wife was not left alone. Controversy still rages about the destruction of the note after Oswald's death at the hands of Jack Ruby on Nov. 24. Hosty, still an FBI agent, insists he destroyed the note on the orders of Special Agent in Charge J. Gordon Shanklin while Shanklin, now retired, says he never heard of the note until recently.

Gale testified that he did not learn of the note and its destruction until four years after his 1971 retirement.

"I thought Oswald should have been put on the Security Index because of his contact with the Fair Play For Cuba Committee, because he said he was a Marxist, he subscribed to The Worker and had given a radio interview in which he said Russia had gone soft on communism and that Cuba was the only revolutionary country in the world," Gale testified. Hoover agreed with the inspection report but the agents working on the Oswald case did not.